

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method for lowering the viscosity of a fat based mixture comprising solids and fat that have been previously refined to a powdery mass, and with the solids being not significantly coated with the fat, comprising the step of subjecting the powdery mass to an elongational flow to break up agglomerates and intimate interactions of the solids with the fat thereby resulting in the production of a pasty mass and coating of the solids with the fat, wherein the elongational flow is achieved by forcing a flow of the fat based mixture through a plurality of flow constrictions positioned relative to the flow.

Claim 2 (currently amended): The method according to claim 1, wherein the ~~predominant elongational flow is achieved by forcing a flow of the fat based mixture through a~~ plurality of flow constrictions are positioned in parallel or series relative to said flow.

Claims 3 (previously presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein the elongational flow is achieved by forcing under pressure and on a continuous manner the powdery mass through a plurality of holes of at least one die plate.

Claims 4-11 (canceled):

Claim 12 (previously presented): The method according to claim 1 wherein the fat based mixture consists essentially of a component chosen from the group consisting of refined chocolate and chocolate-like powder compounds.

Claim 13 (previously presented): The method according to claim 1 wherein the elongational flow is carried out at a start of a liquefying process before shearing of the resulting fat based mixture in a shear mixer.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The method according to claim 13, wherein a final mixing is carried out in an in-line mixer to complete the addition of fat.

Claim 15 (previously presented): The method according to claim 13, wherein a final mixing is carried out in a batch type conche.

Claim 16 (previously presented): A device for reducing the viscosity of a fat based mixture comprising solids and fat that have been refined to a powdery mass comprising a die assembly comprising at least one die plate with a plurality of holes and a pressure generating device to exert a pressure on the mixture located upstream of the die assembly to force the powdery mass through the plurality of holes and thereby create an elongational flow.

Claim 17 (previously presented): The device according to claim 16, wherein the at least one die plate comprises a plurality of small size holes having a size of from 0.5 to 20 mm.

Claim 18 (previously presented): The device according to claim 16, wherein the holes form a tapered, parallel, flared profile as viewed from an inlet to an outlet of the holes.

Claim 19 (previously presented): The device according to claim 16, wherein the at least one die plate comprises up to 200 holes.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The device according to claim 16 wherein there are provided at least two separate die plates positioned in series in a barrel for serial passage of the fat based mixture through the die plates.

Claim 21 (previously presented): A method for lowering the viscosity of a fat based mixture comprising a powdery mass of solids and fat, the solids not being significantly coated with the fat, comprising the step of subjecting the powdery mass to an elongational flow that is sufficient to cause at least some of the agglomerates and intimate interactions of the solids with the fat to break thereby providing a pasty mass having a coating of the solids with the fat, wherein the elongational flow is achieved by forcing under pressure and on a continuous manner the powdery mass through a plurality of holes of at least one die plate.

Claim 22 (previously presented): A method for lowering the viscosity of a fat based mixture comprising solids and fat that have been previously refined to a powdery mass, and with the solids being not significantly coated with the fat, the method comprising:

subjecting the powdery mass to an elongational flow to break up agglomerates and intimate interactions of the solids with the fat thereby resulting in the production of a pasty mass and coating of the solids with the fat, wherein the elongational flow is achieved by forcing under pressure and on a continuous manner the powdery mass through a plurality of holes of at least one die plate and wherein the at least one die plate comprises a plurality of small size holes having a size of from 0.5 to 20 mm.

Claim 23 (previously presented): The method according to claim 22, wherein the holes form a tapered, parallel, flared profile as viewed from an inlet to an outlet of the holes.

Claim 24 (previously presented): A method for lowering the viscosity of a fat based mixture comprising solids and fat that have been previously refined to a powdery mass, and with the solids being not significantly coated with the fat, the method comprising:

subjecting the powdery mass to an elongational flow to break up agglomerates and intimate interactions of the solids with the fat thereby resulting in the production of a pasty mass and coating of the solids with the fat, wherein the elongational flow is achieved by forcing under pressure and on a continuous manner the powdery mass through a plurality of holes of at least one die plate and wherein the at least one die plate comprises from 1 to 200 holes.

Claim 25 (previously presented): The method according to claim 22 wherein at least two separate die plates positioned in series in a barrel are provided for serial passage of the fat based mixture through the die plates.

Claim 26 (previously presented): A method for lowering the viscosity of a fat based mixture comprising solids and fat that have been previously refined to a powdery mass, and with the solids being not significantly coated with the fat, the method comprising:

subjecting the powdery mass to an elongational flow to break up agglomerates and intimate interactions of the solids with the fat thereby resulting in the production of a pasty mass and coating of the solids with the fat, wherein the elongational flow is achieved by forcing under pressure and on a continuous manner the powdery mass through a plurality of holes of at least one die plate; and

forcing the mixture through the at least one die plate by using a pressure generating means exerting a positive pressure upstream of the die plate.

Claim 27 (previously presented): The method according to claim 26, wherein the pressure generating means is selected from the group consisting of a gear pump, a lobe pump, a piston pump and an extruder.

Claim 28 (previously presented): The method according to claim 26, comprising adding solid ingredients and mixing the solid ingredients with the fat in a mixer prior to being pressurized in the pressure generating means.

Claim 29 (currently amended): A method for lowering the viscosity of a fat based mixture comprising solids and fat that have been previously refined to a powdery mass, and with the solids being not significantly coated with the fat, the method comprising:

subjecting the powdery mass to an elongational flow to break up agglomerates and intimate interactions of the solids with the fat thereby resulting in the production of a pasty mass and coating of the solids with the fat, wherein an average particle size of the solids of the refined fat based mixture has been reduced to less than 50 microns, wherein the elongational flow is achieved by forcing under pressure and on a continuous manner the powdery mass through a plurality of holes of at least one die plate.